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PR Perspectives

Western Kentucky University

Kelly Thompson Chapter, PRSSA

Spring/Summer 1986

WKU Chapter honored as "best in the nation."

By Cynthia Dickerson

We came. We saw. We conquered!
Seven PRSSA members ventured toward what has been dubbed "Life in the Fast Lane" last fall. However, fast-paced Detroit, site of the 1985 national PRSA/PRSSA conferences, didn't prove to be too much for a small Kentucky chapter to handle. WKU members returned home with the coveted Outstanding Chapter Award complete with a \$500 check to sweeten the experience.

More than 90 chapters were present at the three-day conference held at the Hotel Pontchartrain, Nov. 10--Nov. 13. The award, which signifies America's most well-rounded student chapter, was presented at an awards luncheon Nov. 12.

Although receiving our 7th national award in 10 years of competition was the highlight of the conference, members also received useful advice from APR professionals and from Olympic Gold Medalist Bart Conner.

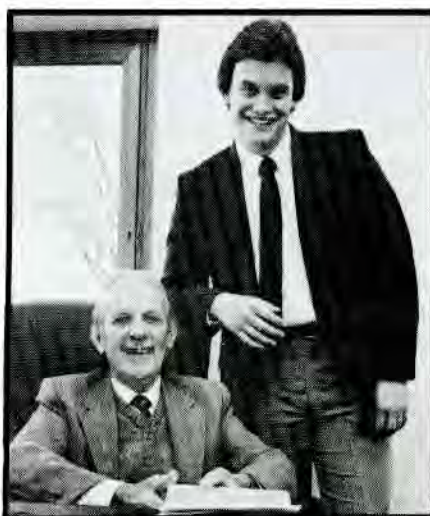
With 33 sessions and topics to choose from, students selected the ones catering to their interests.

Roundtable sessions covered seven general PR areas, including corporate and health care. Topics in general sessions included strategic communication management, crisis PR, computers, issues management, media relations, special events and tips for finding jobs.

Needless to say, members benefited from new knowledge and from reinforced knowledge. But PR techniques weren't the only lessons learned.

"I learned so much, not only about PR, but about a big city and the business world," Greg Martin, senior PR major, said. "I felt that when I left Detroit, I had really been enlightened."

It was impossible to attend all sessions, but of the ones attended, three themes kept



Dr. Kelly Thompson congratulated chapter President Greg Maddox.

leaping out--sensitivity, creativity and good writing skills.

John W. Felton, APR, said that it takes a bit of sensitivity to be a translator.

"You're often working with people with large egos," he said. "You're the guy in the middle trying to get the message through." Felton is vice president of corporate communications for McCormick & Co., Hunt Valley, Md.

Mary Ann Pires, APR, consultant, Armonk, N. Y., said that basic skills aren't enough to succeed in the corporate world. "Demonstrate the ability to do more than

repeat someone else's message," she said. "Don't set your sights on just being a crafter of messages."

Felton agreed that creativity is important. He exemplified this by telling how his company produces an annual report that smells like cinnamon "to make people connect the company with spices."

The PR professional must be a good communicator also. And writing skills are a vital part of the process. But there's more to writing than the "nuts and bolts," said Chester Burger, APR, keynote speaker at the awards luncheon.

"It's not enough to know how to write," he said. "It's also knowing what to write." Burger is a partner in Chester Burger & Co., New York.

Knowing what to do and how to do it is important. But to graduating seniors and to PRSSA members looking for internships, motivation is primary. Olympic Gold Medalist Bart Conner shared his views and experiences on motivation and goal reaching. He said that success is the best motivator.

"One success builds on another," he said. "You use those things, leapfrogging your way to your goals." Conner is a 1984 PR graduate of the University of Oklahoma.

Conner also advised students to work hard to stand out above others and to be

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Teachers: walking the tightrope

By Robert Cook

The tightrope of out-of-class involvement faces many PR instructors today. A delicate balancing act occurs between the time spent preparing for the classroom versus the rigors of maintaining any type of professional liaison with the working world. Also, the university regularly demands that teachers stay active in academic endeavors for the school.

These responsibilities weigh heavily on the scheduling and plans of WKU's three PR instructors — Dr. Robert Blann and Professors Paul Morgan and Cheryl Holland. Each has his own idea of the balance needed to stay successful in the PR field.

Holland feels that being active outside the classroom is extremely important. "Involvement with the world and the industry keeps me up on the latest developments. It keeps me energized and excited about the industry."

Morgan agrees about the importance of outside involvement. "The biggest problem for PR instructors today is that many who are teaching don't have ways to refresh themselves or don't continue to keep up with the profession," Morgan said. "A lot of them just settle into teaching 10 months out of the year and perhaps write a couple

of articles."

Blann describes PR instruction as a full-time job. "Everything outside has a relation to things inside our program," he said. "There's a very definite link to the student's chances for learning and for outside involvement as professionals."

Professional societies on the local and national levels aren't the only outlets for PR instructors, as is the case for many other areas of study. WKU's PR faculty breaks from the traditional forms in keeping up with the industry trends.

Holland regularly talks with a friend who works in the area of business communications.

"I stay current on the 'real world' because I may not always be in teaching," she said. Holland is also a member of an Ad hoc committee for the Kentucky Council on Higher Education. The committee distributes promotional material about higher education and Kentucky's schools. Holland's task has been to write stories involving WKU.

"Writing keeps my communication skills sharp," she said. "I enjoy the challenge."

Morgan has set up a consulting project for himself during the coming summer. "Sometimes even I am surprised by the

changes and trends going on out there," he said. "I always bring back information I get as examples for the classroom. Usually I use case study examples no more than a couple of years old," he said. "I like to have fresh examples for the students, but if an older case is a classic example of a problem, I'll use it too."

Morgan maintains a network of professionals that he relies on to keep him abreast of the situations that corporations and businesses are facing today. His contacts include PR vice presidents from a wide range of industries from petroleum to computers.

Blann uses his contacts to bring in projects which allow students to gain experience. Past work with the Kentucky branch of the American Cancer Society and WKU's Lady Topper basketball has helped give students an understanding of the tasks that they may face in the professional PR arena.

At present, production on the *Navigator* (a corporate newsletter for Navistar International) and organization of the 1986 PRSSA East Central District Conference in Louisville, Ky., continue the hands-on learning experience. Like most projects, these were made possible by outside contacts. Contacts made while attending seminars and workshops are what Blann relies on. He was one of the speakers at a PRSA workshop in 1985. These professional meetings lead to ideas for the instructors to pass on to students.

Morgan likes to use his outside contacts and experiences to help add a professional touch to his lectures.

"Students are my bosses," he said. "I like to get feedback. I can tell by the responses I get if the material is getting through." Australia was a part of Morgan's learning extension. He taught there as a visiting lecturer in 1985.

"It gave me a chance to do some close work with PR professionals in another country," he said. "Students find it hard to relate to the PR problems in a foreign country. I've been able to help with that through my Australian experience."

All three agree that it is extremely difficult to juggle the university's requirements for getting academic promotions.

"I have neglected, to some extent, committee work, publishing and working

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Providing hands-on training for students and making crucial first contacts are Prof. Paul Morgan's and Dr. Robert Blann's top priorities.

To accredit or not to accredit

By Jane T. Massey

Many of us witnessed the diligent and often chaotic activities in the journalism office early this semester in preparation for the accreditation team visit in February.

Shouts of "we need more copies of this!" and "where's the white out?" resounded from the office and echoed through the hallways.

"There's no doubt about it, it was a hectic, crazy time," said Debbie Duckert, student office assistant. She added that preparations, however, had been quietly going on for several months.

However, the work appears to have been worth it. As recently reported in the Journalism Department's *Link* newsletter, the accreditation team's comments were "very encouraging," according to acting Department Head Jim Highland, who thinks that accreditation for the department is likely.

Dr. Robert Blann, PR professor, echoes Highland's optimism.

"It's not official, but we're confident," he said.

Many students, however, are still in the dark concerning the real importance of the accreditation process. The activities and concerns were evident, yet the actual importance of the visit has yet to sink in for the average student.

What is accreditation and how does it work? The Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (ACEJMC) is the agency that sets the standards for accredited journalism and mass communications programs in the schools throughout the United States. The Council consists of both professionals and media instructors who nominate five-member evaluation teams. These teams visit schools that have applied for first-time accreditation, or for re-evaluation, and review their programs meticulously. Each department sequence is thoroughly analyzed in such areas as faculty, curriculum and instruction, facilities, equipment and budget. If the overall department and all sequences meet the Council's standards, the investigative team recommends the program for ac-



All four programs within the department are reviewed for accreditation.

creditation. The team then submits its report to local departmental and university officials who consider suggestions given by the committee members.

After receiving the team's recommendations, the ACEJMC votes on whether "to accredit or not to accredit."

The committee that visited WKU February 18-21 seemed to be impressed by what it saw and heard.

"Dr. Paul Cook came over to congratulate us after the accrediting team had left, because, as he put it, this was one of the most positive exit interviews he'd ever had with an accrediting team," Blann said.

"An accredited sequence is the academic equivalent of having the initials 'APR' after your name. It shows that you've been tested by your peers and have been found to be doing a professional job."

"A positive exit interview and report would suggest that the Council would have no basis for reservations."

But what does this mean for our department and for our sequence in particular?

"It shows that we have a professional level program in all four of our areas," Blann said. "Accreditation will put our sequence among a distinguished and exclusive group of about 30 universities in the country."

Associate Professor Paul Morgan, APR, agrees that accreditation is an asset to the department and the program.

"An accredited sequence is the academic

equivalent of having the initials 'APR' after your name," he said. "It shows that you've been tested by your peers and found to be doing a professional job."

Because personal accreditation in the professional field is being encouraged by PRSA, accreditation at the university level is also being encouraged, and for the same reasons.

"Becoming an accredited member of PRSA (APR) means that you're considered a credible practitioner among your peers," Blann said. "It verifies professionalism and expertise in the field. It essentially means the same for our program."

Coming from an accredited program will be an advantage for the student because, according to Blann, "it means you're not an amateur."

Thorough professional training and practical experience are prerequisites for future employment. WKU's PR teaching program has been designed by the professors to give the student an edge in today's job market. Departmental and sequence accreditation will add to that edge by assuring credibility and professionalism.

The furor in the journalism office has diminished to its above normal commotion, but the hopes run high as everyone waits for the official word of accrediting success.

At press time we received word that the journalism department had been accredited!

The exotic and the expected

By Kimberly Blake

While one student was sitting on the bank of the Cumberland River eating a picnic lunch and sipping lemonade, another was sitting in an office sampling a variety of foreign foods, wishing she had never seen sushi. Both were getting a taste of PR.

These are some of the experiences Western's PR students might face through summer internships. The internships are leading students into a variety of areas, including the Tourism Cabinet in Frankfort, Ky., and the International Trade Commission in Washington, D.C.

If you received any information about Kentucky this past summer, it's quite possible that it came from Susan Stockton, a PR major at WKU. She worked at the Tourism Cabinet last summer under the supervision of Media Relations Specialist, Jim Carroll.

"An employer basically looks at writing ability, grades, experience and a portfolio. Internships provide the opportunity to achieve three of the four."

Stockton wrote press releases and sent information to people who requested it. She was responsible for most of the information that came from the Tourism Cabinet last summer. However, her job also included tasks other than promoting the bluegrass state.

Stockton attended several events sponsored in the state such as the Arabian Horse Show at the Kentucky Horse Park.

"Those were some of the most expensive horses in the world, and I was walking around with people from all over the world, looking at them," Stockton said. "They treated me just like one of the media. I didn't know anything about horses, but I learned to do a lot of homework."

Stockton also promoted the Fairbear and Fairabear, those tall, fuzzy, lovable potbellied bears who are the state fair mascots.

Part of promoting the fair bears involved setting up television interviews and preparing news releases.

"I did all their publicity, but I didn't even meet them until August," she said.

One of the more enjoyable events that Stockton took part in last summer was

white-water rafting down the Cumberland River.

"My boss came to me one day and asked, 'Susan, can you swim?' " she laughed. "When I told him I was a lifeguard, I didn't realize what I was getting into."

"Here I was with my reporter's notebook going down the rapids with all these families," she said. "It was really nice though. They had a picnic lunch for us on the bank, and everyone relaxed and ate sandwiches and drank lemonade."

While Stockton was attending horse fairs and river rafting, Karen Kirsch was in the office of the International Trade Commission in Washington, D.C., sampling foods from foreign countries. Kirsch, a PR major, worked for the ITC under the supervision of Harold Sundstrom, Public Information Officer.

"We sampled foods from foreign countries," Kirsch said. "Some of the candies were really good, but I just couldn't try the sushi," she admitted.

Sampling food was only one part of Karen's job. She also arranged and organized local, national and international press conferences. Like Stockton, she was responsible for a large part of the information that came from the office she worked in.

"On the backs of the releases we sent out, we printed a fact sheet," Kirsch said. "One day, I attached the wrong sheet, and they ran about 2000 copies of it before they noticed something was wrong."

"I was so embarrassed, but my boss was polite about it. He said, 'Karen, timeliness is next to godliness in PR, but accuracy is more important.' " Kirsch worked with people from several different states, as well as many other countries.

"I worked with Jack Norman of the *Wall Street Journal* and Stephen Aug of *Good Morning America*," she said. "I think I made some very important contacts."

Contacts are the name of the game. This is the way many jobs and internships are obtained.

WKU's faculty also encourages internships and takes a part in finding internships for students.

"An internship is one of the most valuable things on a resume," said WKU Associate Professor Paul Morgan. "It's one of the most important things you can do to demonstrate professional experience prior to graduation."

WKU's faculty has been successful in

helping students find internships all over the country.

"We arranged about 20 last summer from Los Angeles to Bowling Green," Morgan said. "We require a description of the duties from the employer before the student begins the internship. We do our best to make sure it's a professional experience."

Internships undoubtedly help graduates to be better prepared for a career in PR.

"An employer basically looks at writing ability, grades, experience (on campus and off) and a portfolio," Morgan said. "And internships provide the opportunity to achieve three of the four."

"I think WKU had me very prepared for my internship," Stockton said. "I even taught my boss a few things (like copy-fitting) last summer." Kirsch, too, felt well-prepared for her "real world" summer in Washington.

It seems that Western's PR majors are out ahead of the pack when it comes to professional/academic preparation for the job market.



Susan Stockton and Karen Kirsch enjoyed very different, but equally productive internship experiences.

Chapter members put the FUN in fundraising!

By Louise Gilchrist

Faster than a speeding typewriter, able to meet rushed deadlines in a single day, is it Superman? No, it's PR man!

The students of the Kelly Thompson Chapter haven't settled for the usual bake sales and car washes to raise money; instead they've tried to really put the "fun" in fundraising this year by selling "PR Man" t-shirts.

The idea for the t-shirt was created by the chapter's president, Greg Maddox. At the chapter's October Halloween party, Maddox was dressed in a business suit at the beginning of the evening. Then, after a brief exit, he reappeared with a triumphant yell as "PR Man," dressed in blue sweatpants, a red cape and t-shirt with "PR Man" in the superman logo design emblazoned on the front.

"The shirt has become a great success among PR students and faculty," says Maddox, "so we decided to sell them as a fundraising effort."

The t-shirts were sold to WKU's chapter members, PR faculty and staff. District members had the opportunity to buy the shirts at the WKU sponsored spring conference held April 4-6 in Louisville.

Jimmie Bruce, chairperson of the fundraising committee, says he expects the chapter to raise money from the sale of the



"PR man" t-shirts are a hot item with our chapter members.

"PR Man" shirts to offset the costs of the April conference and a spring awards banquet.

"It's an idea whose time, we hope, has come," Bruce said.



Chapter on the Move

By Greg Maddox

In late August, when I began my duties as Kelly Thompson Chapter president, I sat at my desk with all the materials in front of me---last year's membership list, the forms, the letters---wondering what I had gotten myself into. Patti Loizzo, the immediate past president, had the ball rolling, but I had to keep it rolling.

The year began well with good membership and meeting attendance numbers. My fellow officers were always available and ready to help. Without their support and hard work, this PRSSA chapter would not have had the success it attained this year.

Our finest moment this semester occurred in November at the national conference in Detroit. Out of approximately 145 PRSSA chapters in the nation, the Kelly Thompson Chapter was named the Outstanding Chapter in the Nation. This is the highest honor given to a PRSSA chapter at the national level. The work of our past, as well as present, officers and members made it possible for WKU to be nationally recognized for its PR program.

Winning this award prompted the other

chapters in our district to select us as the host for the 1986 East Central District Spring Conference. Louisville was chosen as the site for the event held April 4-6. Our theme for the conference, "Fast Track to Success," focused on making it to the top in the PR field. We'd like to extend special thanks to those speakers who helped in making our conference a success.

In addition to the conference, we recently began a PR project for Navistar International Corp., formerly International Harvester. This is the first paid project for our student PR agency, The Kentucky PR Company. The project basically involves design and layout for Navistar's Fort Wayne Technical Center employee newsletter, the *Navigator*. One of our officers, Brian Douglas, is in charge of the project on the WKU campus. The bimonthly publication is designed to create a unified spirit among employees at the company's Fort Wayne location. We hope this is the beginning of a long-lasting relationship for our chapter and agency.

The National PRSSA Caucus was held in San Antonio, Texas, March 22-23, and we were well represented by sophomore Gene Crume. Gene was unanimously

elected District Director by voting delegates from the 13 other chapters in our district. Congratulations Gene! Good luck in your work at the national level. Our last national position was in spring 1982.

Extensive plans have been made for our annual awards banquet. Brian Douglas, banquet chairman, promises that this occasion will be as successful and entertaining as last year's, which was highlighted by remarks from Robert Irvine, Humana Vice President, public relations. Irvine has since joined Jack Guthrie and Associates in Louisville as group vice president.

It's quite clear that this has been a very busy semester with PRSSA at WKU. Things seem to be different now that we are the outstanding chapter and have to prove that we are worthy of that distinction. This isn't to say that we haven't worked hard in the past, but rather that even more is expected from us in the future. I'm sure that future PR majors at WKU will live up to the challenge.

PRSSA Public Relations
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"Fast track" conference success in Louisville

By Christine Schabel

The Kelly Thompson Chapter of PRSSA hosted this year's East Central District Conference in Louisville, Ky. The theme "Fast Track to Success" was chosen because of the increasing number of PR graduates nationwide who are moving ahead quickly in terms of responsibility and financial reward.

The speakers, who included two past presidents of our chapter, gave guests tips necessary to move up quickly when they enter the job market.

Several points were reiterated by the speakers. Some points that were repeated were: be a risk taker; be adaptable to change; keep active externally and most importantly, learn the values of co-workers. Another point that surfaced was conveyed best with an analogy by Richard Long, manager, corporate communications, Dow Chemical Co.

"Show me a baseball player who has not made an error, and I'll show you someone who has not made the team," he said. Two other speakers, Tom Noland, senior man-

ager, public affairs, Humana Inc. and Steve Hunt, assistant vice president corporate communications, Federal Land Bank of Louisville, said that mistakes would, and should, be made, but those mistakes should be chalked up to experience.

While gaining experience, a person should refine his skills and self image. According to Noland, the four most important skills needed to communicate are reading, writing, listening and talking. A person should spend his first years in the business refining those skills, Noland said.

Being able to separate the personal side from the professional side of yourself was an important point made by Chris Johnson, vice president, Wenz-Neely Co.

Additional memorable advice for getting on the fast track to success came from Noland.

"Never forget the goal and the vision of what you want to be," he said.

After the guests learned how to get on the fast track and stay on it, they tried their luck at Keeneland Race Course in Lexi-



Chris Johnson, vice president, The Wenz-Neely Co., explains the importance of separating the professional side of life from the personal.

ngton, Ky., where the conference lived up to its theme. The track conditions were fast and several of the guests enjoyed profitable returns on their bets.

Upon returning to Louisville, the guests were treated to southern hospitality, WKU style. Students from Purdue University and the University of Detroit accompanied several WKU students on a carriage ride around downtown Louisville while others visited popular night spots.

Award

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willing to take risks. "Extend yourself outside your comfort zone," he said.

Although the sessions were held during the day, when the sun went down, members loosened their ties and explored the Motor City.

Most of the entertainment was arranged by conference coordinators. The "I Heard It Through The Grapevine" dance gave those attending a chance to show Detroit how to boogie! Attendees also joined a semi-formal jazz extravaganza and mingled with PRSA members.

One evening WKU students created their own entertainment, traveling across the Ambassador Bridge into Canada for a change of scenery. Another evening, the group decided to go Greek and dined at Pegasus, a restaurant in Detroit's Trapper's Alley.

After returning from the excitement of Detroit, members shared the victory with other members, journalism faculty and guests by hosting a victory toast at Andrew's Restaurant in Bowling Green on Nov. 21.

Dr. Kelly Thompson attended the celebration and commended all segments of

the journalism department. "Not only is this an accomplishment for the chapter and the department but also for the university," he said. "It reflects Western's commitment to excellence."

"Not only is this an accomplishment for the chapter and the department but also for the university. It reflects Western's commitment to excellence."

"We're proud to be a part of this national award-winning chapter and we thank those graduates who were instrumental in the chapter's development last year and in the past," said current president Greg Maddox. "It seems that all the hard work has once again paid off, including seemingly endless hours spent assembling the six entry portfolios."

No goal is unreachable if the path is known and know-how there. PRSSA at WKU reached one of its goals in Detroit last November.

Faculty

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for promotion because of the commitment to my students," Morgan said.

Blann refers to the fine line of the instructor versus the professional. "As an instructor it's difficult to distinguish just where professionalism can be separated from student enrichment," Blann said. "Exposure to the professionals is invaluable."

Holland stresses contacts. "I like to help my students get a network of contacts started," she said. "It's from these contacts that jobs are generated."

Because of outside involvement and university pressures, personal projects are sometimes delayed. Blann has accumulated material through the years for several books. "I just wish I could find the time," he said.

Blann, Holland and Morgan all have their own ideas about involvement outside the classroom. But they all agree that anything done outside the classroom should be reflected in the instruction offered inside the classroom.

With the field changing every day, the walk on the academic/professional tight-rope becomes even more challenging.

A professional's point of view...

(The following is excerpted from remarks by Dow Chemical corporate communications manager Richard Long.)

I know something about career fast-tracks. I've seen people get aboard a career rocket and do great things. Many have also fallen off that fast track.

I'm operating under four assumptions:

- 1) You're well-schooled in the basics--writing, especially--and you've made the most of your college experience.
- 2) You've made a wise career choice. Journalism schools are bursting with public relations majors, and only about half the graduates will find entry-level jobs. Worse, many majors have an unrealistic understanding of public relations work.
- 3) Your personal integrity is beyond question.
- 4) You're willing to earn your successes.

If those assumptions are reasonable and apply to you, then three questions are very pertinent:

- 1) Is there a "Fast Track" in public relations careers?
 - 2) If so, how do I get on it?
 - 3) Once aboard, how do I stay on it?
- IS THERE A FAST TRACK?

The first question is also the easiest to answer. Yes, there is a fast track in the PR business. That path may exist within a large company or agency. Or, it may mean changing employers in order to find growth opportunities.

HOW DO I GET ON IT?

The route includes consistently excellent performance, a break or two along the way and a knack for avoiding self-inflicted gunshot wounds in either foot.

There's also an occasional paradox that the harder you try to achieve visibility or recognition, the less likely you are to make it. Talented people can become so pre-occupied with stardom that they forget their primary mission. This passion for form, rather than substance, leads to wrong things being done for the wrong reasons.

If there is a single key to success, it's a reputation for getting results. A willingness to work hard is noble and commendable, but companies and agencies pay for results, not effort.

A winner keeps the ego under control. Even seemingly trivial assignments get the same attention to detail. Someone has to do the grunt-work, and that usually means entry-level people.

Conceptualizing is the second all-important quality. It may be part instinct and part learned behavior. The strong conceptualizer is a quick-study who focuses on the client's needs.

A good listener and thorough note-taker, this person knows that success requires more than just a knowledge of public relations techniques. And chances of success are enhanced as you learn more about the company's culture, personality and business.

Strong conceptual skills lead you to creative solutions to problems. It's never too early to begin developing and displaying creativity, because clients usually welcome a fresh approach to their needs.

The fourth important quality is less-



defined territory. I call it style. Some style-related traits are part of the winner's arsenal in public affairs.

The most apparent of these is a "can-do" attitude. Nothing is too tough, or too inconvenient, or "won't work." This goes back to existing for the client--you tell me your problem, and I'll find a solution.

Another key trait is constructive competitiveness. Winners have spunk and tenacity without being obnoxious. They welcome challenges. Solid team players, they also realize that only a few players make the starting team. They know that most corporations grade "on the curve," and only 15 percent of the young people will get the highest performance rating, and only a few of those will make it to the fast track.

Winners parlay confidence into selling

skills. They become persuasive advocates of their best approach to a challenge. The best public relations plan ever written is worthless if left unsold.

The fifth quality, intangibles, may defy quantitative description, but "charisma," "presence" and "moxie" affect the way you're seen by management.

Finally, there will be opportunities for visibility with your management. It may be time spent on a plane, or at a company function. Often these are informal situations, but first impressions endure. Don't let opportunities pass without making your mark. Ask an informed question which reflects your grasp of company situations or current events. Or, suggest a solution to a problem facing the organization. Whatever you do, don't just sit there.

STAYING ON THE FAST TRACK

Once on the fast track, you naturally want to avoid falling--or being shoved--off it. How?

For starters, stick to fundamentals. Certain basic traits and tools will carry you part of the way. Why not continue to draw on those same skills, supplemented by the new skills you'll acquire? A football team that makes it to the Super Bowl doesn't throw away its playbook and start over before the big game.

Be open-minded about jobs in marketing communications, issue management, a division or an international area of your company. This may involve a lateral move, rather than a promotion. Here is where maturity and a long-range perspective is helpful. A lateral move often provides experiences that pay off several years down the road.

Learn from your mistakes by not repeating them. Don't be afraid to take prudent risks, even though you are going to foul up once in awhile.

A FINAL THOUGHT

Always be scrupulously ethical and seize opportunities to upgrade our profession. If asked to do something unethical or illegal, decline firmly, but in an appropriate manner.

And, if you find that your boss' idea of public relations is limited to getting his or her picture in the paper, or sending flowers to a girl friend, remember that we're free to work where and for whom we please.

Good luck in your career plans. Some of you will make that fast track. Others of you will be solid contributors who will more than earn your keep. Whatever you do, be the best you can be.

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Blann celebrates 15th year at WKU

By Louise Gilchrist

Changes and innovations come to the PR sequence with each passing school semester.

But through the many years and all these changes, one person remains steadfast in our program--the man who, 15 years ago, laid the groundwork for the entire PR program. He is Dr. Robert L. Blann, the sequence coordinator.

Some people say he's been around WKU as long as the PR sequence has existed. They're mistaken; he was here before there was a PR segment. In fact, he created it and has developed the PR curriculum that is in effect today. It has been a rewarding yet strenuous 15 years for him.

"Just as the physical climb from the bottom of the campus up to the top of the hill is vigorous, our climb from a mere idea to a successful PR program has been just as exertive," Blann said. "Every step has been tough, but I think we are at the top of the hill right now."

He may be right. The program has been successful, thanks in great part to his continued perseverance and enthusiasm.

His dedication to the PR sequence has benefited a countless number of students through the years. At the spring PRSSA Awards Banquet, Blann received special recognition from one of his former students. Rick Redding, a 1982 graduate and present assistant manager of sports publications at Host Communications, Inc. in Lexington, Ky., was the recipient of the 1986 PR Alumnus Award. During his acceptance speech, he remarked on the influence that Blann's teaching and support has had on him.

Redding said he could remember sitting in Blann's class thinking, "I'll never use any of this stuff he's teaching." He feels differently today, though. "I look back now and realize how many times I have drawn upon the things he taught me. I'm really thankful that Dr. Blann was there for me, and I'm glad he's still here for the students today."

Blann's presence keeps the program's past alive.

"I'm pleased with all that's been accomplished in my 15 years here," he said. "But there are always more classes to be taught and more projects to oversee. My work isn't complete yet."

Through all the many changes in the PR sequence, it's good to know that some things stay the same.

PR Perspectives

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